

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 2580

DEA FOR ENOA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, CO
SUBJ: PRESIDENT LOPEZ TV INTERVIEW - DRUG TRAFFICKING

REF: BOGOTA 1960

1. PRESIDENT LOPEZ DEVOTED PORTION OF TV INTERVIEW MARCH 16 TO NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING QUESTIONS IN AN ATTEMPT TO PREPARE COLOMBIAN PUBLIC FOR SOME REVELATIONS THAT MIGHT COME FROM CBS TV "SIXTY MINUTES" BROADCAST. BASIC THRUST OF INTERVIEW WAS POSITIVE, BUT INCLUDED SEVERAL SHARP COMMENTS ON THE U.S. ATTITUDE AND ACTIONS.

2. LOPEZ INTRODUCED DRUG SUBJECT IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY, SAYING THAT EVERY TIME THE U.S. HAD A PROBLEM, IT ATTEMPTED TO TIE IT IN TO DRUGS AS WAS THE CASE WITH TORIJOS AND THE TREATY, AS WELL AS WITH CASTRO, THE PRESIDENT OF PERU, AND COLOMBIA, WHERE THERE WERE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST OFFICIALS AND POLITICIANS.

3. REFERRING TO THE UPCOMING SIXTY MINUTES BROADCAST, LOPEZ SAID THAT "WITH THE HELP OF THE USG" SOME CONFUSION AND
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RUMORS COULD BE CLARIFIED. FOR THE BROADCAST HE HAD POINTED OUT THERE IS A PERMANENT EXCHANGE OF INFORMAL INFORMATION BETWEEN THE USG AND GOC. ONE OF THESE REPORTS LISTED AS MATTERS FOR INVESTIGATION, CHARGES AGAINST COLOMBIAN OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS OF THE GOC. LOPEZ SAID HE WAS HAPPY THAT IN THE BROADCAST, PETER BOURNE WOULD EXPLAIN THAT THE CHARGES WERE NOT PROVEN BY THE U.S. BUT HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE GOC

FOR INVESTIGATION.

4. ASKED FOR DETAILS, LOPEZ SUMMARIZED HIS REFUTATION OF THE CHARGES AGAINST CASTRO, THE MINISTERS OF DEFENSE AND LABOR, AND TURBAY'S NEPHEW THAT HE PRESENTED IN THE CBS INTERVIEW (REFTEL). HE STATED THAT SUCH CHARGES CREATED A BAD ATMOSPHERE, BUT COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS DISSIPATING, AS THE U.S. RECOGNIZES THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO FIND A GOVERNMENT AS BASICALLY COMMITTED TO THE FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS AS IS THE GOC.

5. FINALLY, LOPEZ WAS ASKED HOW MISLEADING REPORTS IN THE WHITE HOUSE COULD HAVE SUCH REPERCUSSIONS ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. LOPEZ REPLIED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD IT WAS A DRAFT THAT WAS BEING WORKED ON THAT HAD FALLEN INTO THE HANDS OF REPORTERS OF LE MONDE. LOPEZ REPEATED THAT IT WAS A MATTER "OF NOTES WITHOUT INVESTIGATION, WITHOUT BACK-UP."

5. COMMENT: THE PRESIDENT INFORMED THE AMBASSADOR THAT HIS INTENTION WAS TO DIFFUSE WHATEVER IMPACT THE CBS BROADCAST MIGHT HAVE IN COLOMBIA. HE WAS VERY PLEASED AT DR. BOURNE'S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS POSED TO HIM BY THE "60 MINUTES" INTERVIEWER. HE WAS UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT HIS OWN INTERVIEW AND OBVIOUSLY BELIEVED HE HAD GONE OVERBOARD. IN HIS OWN WAY HE WAS TRYING TO MAKE AMENDS. THE PRESIDENT CRAFTILY DESIGNED HIS MARCH 16 INTERVIEW AROUND THE ISSUE OF THE PANAMA CANAL
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TREATIES AND HIS OBSERVATIONS ON NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING SEEMINGLY AROSE OUT OF A QUESTION CONCERNING TORRIJOS AND DRUGS. IN A WELL-PLANNED PARENTHETICAL STATEMENT, HE ALSO BROUGHT IN CASTRO, THE PRESIDENT OF PERU, AND ONLY THEN INTERJECTED AS AN APPARENT AFTERTHOUGHT HIS OBSERVATIONS ON THE "60 MINUTES" PROGRAM. HE HAS ASKED THAT WE KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH TO COORDINATE RESPONSES IN THE EVENT SOME FURTHER REACTION IS NECESSARY ONCE THE CBS TELEVISION PROGRAM IS BROADCAST. END COMMENT. ASECIO

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